

Executive Summary

Nevada's 2003 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan—Assessment and Policy Plan presents the top eight outdoor recreation issues and actions recommended to address those issues—chapter 1, an overview of the outdoor recreation resources and providers—chapter 2, research results on outdoor recreation needs and participation—chapter 3, a detailed look at public opinion on public land management in Nevada—chapter 4, suggestions on how to implement the plan—chapter 5, and a detailed description of the planning and research methods applied to develop this plan—appendix A.

Plan Goal

The goal of the plan is to increase and improve the quality of outdoor recreation opportunities in Nevada.

Outdoor Recreation Issues and Recommended Actions

The top three outdoor recreation issues in Nevada and the three top ranked actions recommended to address each of these three issues are:

Issue # 1: Public access to public lands for diverse outdoor recreation.

Action # 1: Identify lands that should be maintained for public use and develop a process to prioritize acquisition of these lands (similar to the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act but for the whole state).

Action # 2: Limit public land acquisitions to the minimal property interests required to insure and preserve public access to public lands and recreational resources. Developers developing lands need to provide for and maintain existing and future access and easements to public lands.

Action # 3: Approach the Nevada Congressional delegation with the proposal that they sponsor legislation turning some BLM lands in the State over to the State in perpetuity for outdoor recreational purposes.

Issue # 2: Funding parks and recreation.

Action # 1: Propose several funding mechanisms to governor and legislature along with statistics on population, surveys.

Action # 2: Develop a funding program to address the need for additional financial support for outdoor recreation. Make recommendations to the Nevada State Legislature for long-term funding program.

Action # 3: Introduce a legislative bill (recreational tax or gas tax) to increase budget for all agencies involved in outdoor recreation, from the local to state levels. Encourage congress to increase outdoor recreation funding for federal agencies in Nevada that provide outdoor recreational opportunities.

Issue # 3: Recreational trails and pathways.

Action # 1: Get all the land managers at the BLM, US Forest Service, US Park Service, State Parks, counties, cities, and park leaders with the public to create a master plan for the State. Update the plan every 5 years.

Action # 2: Inventory all areas for existing trails and pathways. Develop master plans for potential/future trails, bike lanes, and pathways. Implement the master plan with help and input from participating and interested user groups. We need many more miles of trails, bike lanes, and pathways in Nevada!

Action # 3: Encourage interagency cooperation to look at the regional context of trails and the connectivity of these facilities (share dollar resources/partnerships).

Nevada's Recreation Resource Base

Nevada has a variety of natural resources available to the public for participation in outdoor recreation activities. Nevada has more mountain ranges and public lands than any other state except Alaska. Natural lakes include Tahoe, Pyramid, and Walker. Large man-made lakes include Lahontan, Mead, and Mohave. Three federal agencies—the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National Park Service—administer vast amounts of land in Nevada available to the public for outdoor recreation.

Outdoor Recreation Participation

Annual Participation Days

Eighty-four percent of Nevadans 16 years of age and older participated in at least one outdoor recreational activity in the year 2000. In 2002, Nevadans participated in an estimated 268 million annual participation days of outdoor recreational activities, with 235 million of these participation days occurring in Nevada.

The population in Nevada grew by 66% from 1990-2000, the fastest percentage growth rate in the United States. Due to this population increase, annual participation day estimates are projected to increase to a total of 316 million days in the year 2010, with 277 million days occurring in Nevada.

Percent of Nevadans Participating in Outdoor Recreation in Nevada

In the year 2000, the percent of Nevadans 16 years of age and older participating in outdoor recreation activities was as follows: 44% pleasure driving, 37% picnicking, 32% swimming in a pool, 32% walking without a dog, 31% wildlife viewing, 30% swimming in a lake or stream, 28% hiking, 28% walking with a dog, 27% motorboating, and 26% went lake fishing.

Outdoor Recreation Participation in the Nevada Market Region

The ten most popular outdoor recreation activities in the Nevada Market Region (Nevada, California, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, Arizona) for persons 16 years of age and older in the year 2000 were walking for pleasure—79%, family

gathering—73%, view/photograph natural scenery—62%, visit nature centers, etc.—57%, gardening or landscaping for pleasure—56%, picnicking—56%, sightseeing—49%, driving for pleasure—47%, view/photograph wildflowers, trees, etc.—45%, and visit a historical site—43%.

Outdoor Recreation Needs in Nevada

In 2001, Nevadans cited parks/greenbelts, children parks/playgrounds, bicycling trails, soccer fields, and swimming pools and areas as the five outdoor recreation areas and facilities most needed *in their local community*. Nevadans cited camping, fishing, parks, hiking, and biking as the five outdoor recreation areas and facilities most needed *outside their local community*.

Public Land Management Issues

In a 1997 study, 100% of the residents of Nevada living in urban areas said that the management of Nevada's public lands is either very important (97%) or important (3%) to them. Ninety-nine percent of the residents in Nevada living in rural areas said that the management of Nevada's public lands is either very important (98%) or important (1%) to them. In a 2001 citizen's survey, 67% of Nevada residents either strongly agreed (40%) or somewhat agreed (27%) with setting aside more designated wilderness areas in Nevada; 92% said that maintaining unique or unusual natural areas in a natural state was important to them, with 71% saying this is very important and 21% saying it is somewhat important; 93% said that

setting aside Nevada's historic areas, ghost towns, and other examples of its cultural heritage was important to them, with 63% finding this very important and 30 finding it somewhat important. These research findings indicate that Nevadans are strong conservationists.

Nevadan's Visitation to Nevada State Parks

When asked "Did you visit a Nevada State Park during the year 2000?" 58% responded yes. When the 58% who said that they had visited a Nevada State Park in the year 2000 were asked to name up to three of these parks visited most often, 39% correctly listed the name of at least one Nevada State Park. Twenty-six percent correctly cited the names of all Nevada State Parks they listed, and 16% did not list the names of any visited site that corresponds to one managed by the Nevada State Parks. Thus, 39% of Nevada residents can be verified as having visited a Nevada State Park in the year 2000. Although Nevada residents are avid park visitors to parks in Nevada, many visitors are not aware of the administering agency. Therefore, Nevada State Parks does have an identity problem with the citizens of Nevada.

Plan Implementation

A variety of mechanisms in Nevada may serve to implement recommendations in this plan and to meet the outdoor recreation needs of Nevadans and our visitors. The Nevada Division of State Parks administers the federal Recreational Trails and the Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants Program for the state. Combined, the state receives about \$1.7-\$2.2 million annually in federal funds from these two

grant programs to develop and maintain recreational trails and to acquire and develop parks and recreation areas. Recipients of these funds include non-profit groups and federal, state, and local entities.

On November 2, 2002, Nevada voters approved a ballot proposal (Question 1) to issue \$200 million in bonds for conservation and resource protection. This landmark environmental decision is designed to preserve water quality; protect open space, lakes, rivers, wetlands, and wildlife habitat; and to restore and improve parks, recreational areas, and historic and cultural resources.

The Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) of 1998 allows the Bureau of Land Management to sell specified BLM land in Clark County. To date proceeds from these land sales have generated over \$595 million to purchase environmentally sensitive lands, to improve recreational areas, to develop recreational trails, and to fund other outdoor recreation related initiatives in Nevada, most of which are in Clark County. Revenues from continuing land sales from the SNPLMA will contribute significantly to the provision of outdoor recreation opportunities in Nevada.

Public Input

Nevadans were very responsive to seven research efforts conducted by the Nevada Division of State Parks to obtain information and data to develop this plan. Over 54% of Nevada residents 16 years of age and older responded to a citizen's mail survey in the year 2001, the purpose of which was to ask

residents of Nevada their opinions on questions related to outdoor recreation in Nevada and to determine how often Nevadans participated in 41 outdoor recreation activities in the year 2000. Another 132 individuals representing user groups, non-profit entities, and federal, state, and local governmental entities agreed to participate in six mail surveys to identify the eight issues and 59 actions cited in chapter 1 of this plan. These 132 individuals represented 62% of those asked to participate. Another 6% responded but were unable to participate, so a total of 68% responded in some fashion to the request. Response rates to the six mail surveys ranged from 58% to 77%.

Conclusions

Nevadan's high rates of participation in outdoor recreation activities; their strong support to conserve natural areas, wilderness areas, historical sites, and cultural resources; and their strong response rates to provide information to develop this plan all serve as indicators that much can be accomplished in Nevada to improve the quality and quantity of outdoor recreation opportunities to meet the needs of the citizens of Nevada and our many visitors. The vast natural resources found on public lands in Nevada enhance the opportunity to meet the outdoor recreation needs in Nevada. Throughout the many public comments received to develop this plan, one can detect a willingness of Nevadans to work cooperatively to make Nevada a premier state for natural resource based tourism and outdoor recreation while conserving the state's precious natural resources. This plan can serve as the impetus to launch such an effort.